

## Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY NICHOLAS KLACSANZKY

*The Photograph as Haiku: For students, poets, and photographers* by M.H. Rubin (Lulu Publishing, Research Triangle, NC: 2023. 76 pages, 9" x 7". Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-387422-48-7. \$26.98 from lulu.com and the Kindle version is available for \$9.99 on amazon.com.

As a dabbler in photography, this unique volume on how haiku and photography intersect sparked my interest on each page. It starts with a short but insightful introduction named "Discovering Haiku." It tells the author's journey as a photographer and haiku poet. Most importantly, it describes his philosophy of how a photograph can exhibit the nature of haiku—that both disciplines can converse with each other. M.H. Rubin also provides fine examples from other photographers that correlate to haiku principles in the introduction.

The main part of the book demonstrates the "nine attributes of haiku, illustrated by a set of my personal photographs—of friends, family, vacations, and daily life," as the author states. Besides photographs, each section is accompanied by haiku. The vast majority of the haiku in the book are Robert Hass translations of Bashō. There is also a haiku from Issa translated by Robert Hass and a haiku by Masahide (a student of Bashō) translated by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto. The selections of haiku as illustrations of techniques are all on point. Perhaps, the author could have included more of a range of poets, though. Buson comes to mind, as he was both a renowned painter and haiku poet.

The nine attributes described in the book are "Two Uneven Beats, with a Twist," "Not Obvious & Doesn't Shout," "Structured, but Natural," "Simple: Remove the Extraneous," "Time: More Moment than Object," "Intimate & Authentic," "Everyday Life," "Perfectly Imperfect," and "A Prac-

tice.” These ideas are used in the author’s curriculum when teaching at Santa Fe Workshops, an educational institution for photography in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Each section is enlightening in its own way. Perhaps I resonate the strongest with the attribute “Everyday Life.” When writing haiku in an elevated state, I feel each moment is a haiku and we simply need to write it down. Rubin’s photographs finely illustrate this state of mind in this section—especially his photo of eggshells and salt on a plate.

The book ends with a conclusion that gives a perspective on street and classical photography being aligned with haiku aesthetics. This transitions well into the subsequent section “The Classics” which briefly explores classical photography that aligns well with haiku principles. Lastly, the author has acknowledgments and image data for those who are curious about how the photos were taken and their properties.

Rubin has given us what appears to be a succinct version of his curriculum on haiku aesthetics in photography. The prose is didactic yet inspiring and personal. Each section of the book is akin to a haiku: brief, concise, and poetic without being hit over the head by poeticism. You can easily read the book quickly if you want but it is more of a book to savor a bit at a time, in my opinion. This is especially true if you are a new student of haiku, as the attributes Rubin discusses are deep and take a while to absorb and to put into practice.

As an amateur photographer, the selections of the photographs were clear in relation to haiku principles. Rubin’s photographs are well-composed, striking, and natural in their beauty. The variety of techniques and styles in the author’s photographs is inspiring and exhilarating to witness.

I think the book displays enough examples of photography with haiku aesthetics by a variety of photographers, yet as a photography enthusiast, I wanted even more. Clocking in around 70 pages of content, I could have read up to 100 pages of dissection of photographs and their haiku aesthetics.

Perhaps this could be the first book in a series on this subject.

This is a pivotal book in the realm of photography and haiku as an intersection. It's both a page-turner and a space to contemplate. It offers many lessons for beginners in both disciplines and a lot of food for thought for those who have been engaged in these arts. I can foresee reading this book again and again, as its insights are often transformative. ◻■

### REVIEWED BY JACOB D. SALZER

*Red Leaves: Selected Haiku of Peggy Lyles, Second Edition* (Brooks Books, Taylorville, IL: 2023). 160 pages, 6.42" x 9.42". Clothbound. ISBN: 978-1-929820-23-8. \$24 from [brooksbookshaiku.com](http://brooksbookshaiku.com) (20% discount)

This second edition of selected haiku by Peggy Lyles (edited by Randy & Shirley Brooks) combines the first edition titled "To Hear the Rain" with additional haiku under the section titled "Red Leaves." This new title comes from one of the last haiku Peggy Lyles wrote before she passed away in September of 2010: *into the afterlife red leaves*. John Stevenson wrote the preface for this book and adds a poignant message: "The autumn leaves, in the last phase of thier lives, present us with a final flair of warm colors. These late poems of Peggy Willis Lyles do the same thing..."

In this book, Lyles writes: "Sometimes we say too much. Words get in the way...No wonder haiku are so popular all around the world...Expressed in simple language, they invite the reader to participate as co-creator. Sometimes they seem to leap from heart to heart." In that spirit, here are two haiku by Lyles that touched my heart: (1) *oval frame / a woman curves / around her child*, and (2) *summer night / we turn out all the lights / to hear the rain*. From "To Hear the Rain," these four haiku also stood out to me as excellent examples: (1) *reaching for green pears— / the pull / of an old scar*, (2) *sonic boom / the peony sheds / a small black ant*, (3) *high noon / a cat stares down / the chipmunk's hole*, and (4) *cricket sounds / rise into night / the names of the dead*.